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SUNITA WILLIAMS RETIRES FROM NASA, CAPPING 27-YEAR CAREER

Indian-origin NASA astronaut Sunita Williams, who inspired generations to dream big and push boundaries, has retired from the space agency

FINISHED 3 MISSIONS DURING 608 DAYS IN SPACE

During her time with the US space agency, she completed three missions aboard the International Space Station. Williams logged 608 days in space. She ranks sixth on the list of longest single spaceflights by an American, tied with NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore, with both logging 286 days during NASA's Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew-9 missions

A PERSPECTIVE SHAPED BY SPACE TRAVEL

- Williams was born to Gujarati father Deepak Pandya and Slovenian mother Ursuline Bonnie Pandya in the US state of Ohio in 1965
- Reflecting on space travel, the 60-year-old, who is currently visiting India, said the idea of humans arguing endlessly over issues seems so "silly" when you look at Earth as "one planet" from outer space

Dec 27

WHEN WILLIAMS OFFICIALLY RETIRED FROM NASA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Don goes back foot on Greenland pitch

Rules out using force, but demands immediate negotiations to take control of the Danish territory

AGENCIES @ Davos

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday appeared to tone down his aggressive pitch to wrest control of Greenland from NATO ally Denmark as he ruled out force.

"I don't have to use force. I don't want to use force. I won't use force," he said at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland.

"I'm seeking immediate negotiations to once again discuss the acquisition of Greenland by the United States, just as we have acquired many other territories throughout our history, as many of the European nations have," he said.

Trump claimed his country is in the best position to control Greenland and wondered why most of Europe is opposing his "small ask".

In his 70-minute-long speech, he also lashed out at Denmark for being "ungrateful" for the US protection of the Arctic island during World War-2. "All the United States is asking for is a place called Greenland where we already had it as a trustee, but respectfully returned it to Denmark after we defeated the Germans, the Japanese, the Italians and others in World War II. We gave it back. We were a powerful force then, but we are a much more powerful force now," Trump said, staking claims over the region.

Training his guns on EU, Trump said the US is booming but Europe is "not heading in the right direction." On Tuesday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had called Trump's tariffs on eight European countries over Greenland a "mistake" and questioned his trustworthiness.

Trump said the US needs Greenland for strategic reasons and not for rare earth minerals. "We were a powerful force when we saved Greenland and gave it to Denmark after World War II, but we are much more powerful now," he said.

Responding to Trump's speech at Davos, Danish foreign minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said: "In isolation it's positive that the president says what he does regarding the military, but that does not make the problem go away... It's clear from this speech that the president's ambition is intact." P14

The ripple effects

'INT'L ORDER UPENDED'

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned world leaders against upending international order. "When a handful of individuals can bend global narratives or dictate the terms of public debate, we are facing inequality and the corruption of institutions & our shared values."

'DON SPEECH NOT HELPING'

Trump's assurance that he would not use force to take Greenland is a positive statement but it won't resolve the issue, said Danish foreign minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen

EU-U.S. TRADE PACT ON HOLD

The European Parliament on Wednesday decided to suspend its work on the European Union's trade deal with the United States in protest against Trump's demands and threats over Greenland

MARKETS RECOVER

Markets mostly steadied on Wednesday after Trump toned down his rhetoric in his threats to acquire Greenland, clarifying he wouldn't use force

Guv refuses to address joint session over VB-G RAM G

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @Bengaluru

A day after governors of Tamil Nadu and Kerala were at the centre of controversies over their respective addresses to assemblies, Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Wednesday followed suit by refusing to address the joint session of state legislature scheduled for Thursday.

Parts of the governor's address to the joint session on Thursday are said to contain certain references to the Centre which has repealed the UPA government's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and replaced it with the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, due to which Governor Gehlot has refused to deliver his address. Gehlot raised reservations on 11 paragraphs in the speech drafted by the Karnataka cabinet with regard to the NDA repealing MGNREGA.

According to sources, since the governor is mandated to address the session as per Article 176(1) of the Constitution, he insists on skipping parts of the speech, using his discretion. They said as parts of the address were against VB-G RAM G, which has become an Act after the Bill was passed in Parliament, it would be unconstitutional to speak against it and he preferred to skip those parts.

A high-level delegation led by Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil, including Advocate-General K Shashi Kiran Shetty and CM's legal advisor AS Ponnanna, rushed to Raj Bhavan and held talks with the governor on Wednesday evening.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the governor, Patil said, "It is mandatory for any governor to address the joint session of legislature as per Article 176(1) of the Constitution. The governor has said that 11 paragraphs should be dropped from the speech. We will consult the Chief Minister and communicate to the governor. The Constitution is the same for everyone, whether the President, Governor or government. We have not been told so far that the Governor will not come to address the session."

Patil said the delegation interacted with Governor Gehlot on the 11 paragraphs on VB-G RAM G Act in the address. "There is no situation to take the legal route as yet, and if it demands we will cross the bridge," he said, subtly expressing confidence that the governor could address the joint session. CONTINUED ON: P4

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot being felicitated by former Rajya Sabha member K C Ramamurthy at a programme in Bengaluru on Wednesday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

SC on SIR of poll rolls: No power can be untrammelled

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) whether its powers to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls can be considered untrammelled and beyond judicial review.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said revision of poll rolls could lead to civil consequences. "Revision of voter list can lead to some civil consequences for a person who is on the list, so if something which will affect civil rights of people, then why should not the process followed be in accordance with sub-section 2 (of the Representation of the People (RP) Act which provides for roll revision in a prescribed manner)?" the CJI asked.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the ECI, cited clause (3) of Section 21 of the RP Act, which reads: "Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (2), the Election Commission may at any time, for reasons to be recorded, direct a special revision of the electoral roll for any constituency or part of a constituency in such manner as it may think fit." The CJI, however, asked if Section 21(2) enables the ECI to go beyond the rules, can the poll body then exempt itself from its own notified procedures when it undertakes an SIR under Section 21(3). "So, why should we not expect you (ECI) to have a transparent procedure," he questioned.

Justice Bagchi observed, "No power or jurisdiction can be untrammelled, no matter how high one is. The manner of conduct of the revision of electoral rolls must conform with the principles of natural justice. It should be just and fair." Dwivedi agreed that the ECI must satisfy the court that the process was just, fair and transparent. P11

IAF AIRCRAFT CRASHES

The wreckage of an IAF microlite training aircraft being recovered from a pond in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj on Wednesday. Two persons onboard, including the pilot, were rescued | PTI

Youth injures spine in fall, friends kill him over med costs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A 26-year-old man who went missing earlier this month was found dead 16 days later in a well, with his body tied to a stone. Investigations revealed that the deceased was allegedly killed by his two friends to avoid bearing the cost of medical treatment after he suffered a spinal cord injury from a fall during a New Year party. The incident took place in Vajarahalli village of Magadi taluk in the Bengaluru South district.

Prajwal

Sudeep

The deceased has been identified as Vinod Kumar (26), a daily wage labourer. The accused are Sudeep (19), a construction worker, and Prajwal (19), a car driver with a private company. All three are residents of Kalyanapura village in Magadi taluk. They were arrested on Sunday and remanded in police custody.

According to the police, during the alcohol party, the friends asked Vinod to climb a coconut tree to collect tender coconuts to mix with liquor. He lost balance and fell from a height of nearly 30 feet, suffering a severe spinal cord injury. As Vinod screamed in pain, they panicked and decided to take him home. However, while heading back, Sudeep and Prajwal worried that villagers might question them and that the medical treatment would cost several lakhs, which they would have to bear. To avoid this responsibility, they allegedly threw Vinod in to a lake near Vajarahalli, which has minimal public movement. P7

Govt weighs dual budget allocation on G RAM G

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AS the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, which replaces the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), is yet to be formally notified and brought into force, the Centre is considering a dual budgetary allocation in the upcoming Union Budget to ensure uninterrupted support to the scheme. Officials said since the rules under the new legislation are still being framed, the government may provide funding simultaneously for both MGNREGA and the VB-G RAM G scheme during a transitional phase. The new law will be operationalised only after the rules are notified.

The move comes as the government plans to gradually phase out MGNREGA over the next six months while rolling out the new legislation. With the VB-G RAM G bill yet to come into force, the Centre is keen to avoid any disruption in wage employment for rural households, officials added. According to sources, during a recent meeting of a parliamentary panel, the government informed members that it is considering additional budgetary support and dual allocation to ensure a smooth transition to the VB-G RAM G.

Signalling a sharp jump in budgetary support, the government had earlier announced that ₹1,51,282 crore would be allocated for VB-G RAM G. Sources said that the Centre may further increase the outlay in its budget announcement. MGNREGA was allotted an unchanged ₹86,000 crore in both FY25 and FY26. Under the new Act, the estimated Central share of funding is ₹95,692.31 crore, with the states bearing the rest. The new Act mandates a 60:40 cost-sharing ratio between the Centre and the states.

Opposition members have, however, raised concerns, saying that states remain in the dark over the proposed norms for allocation of funds under the new Act.

NEXT ICC OPTIONS

Forfeiture or Scotland in place of B'desh

THE International Cricket Council (ICC) continues to juggle multiple T20 World Cup related issues even though the event is now the world governing body has to consider the way forward. And time is very limited before the first set of matches on February 7.

It's understood that one of the ways could be a last

What adds to the intrigue is that when contacted by this daily, a Cricket Scotland source said they 'aren't commenting' on the matter. But do remember that Jersey finished higher

Essentially beginning the tournament with a win against their names. But that may not be palatable to the broadcasters who have spent a lot of money to secure the rights for this event. Lack of four live

T20 WC TUSSLE

ICC DENIES BANGLADESH'S REQUEST TO SHIFT THEIR MATCHES OUT OF INDIA

As reported by this daily, if Bangladesh choose not to come to India for upcoming Men's T20 World Cup on Thursday, ICC is likely to replace them with Scotland in Group C | P17

EXPRESS READ

Up to RCB to come back to Chinnaswamy: Venki

Bengaluru: Karnataka State Cricket Association president Venkatesh Prasad placed the onus on Royal Challengers Bengaluru to keep their IPL 2026 home matches at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. "I sincerely hope that RCB will play all their seven home matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium," Prasad said | P17

Row over Udupi DC waving saffron flag

Udupi: A row has erupted in Udupi after DC Swaroopa TK used a saffron flag to flag off the Paryaya Mahotsav procession taken out from Jodukatte to Krishna Mutt on Sunday. Even as the district Congress sought action against Swaroopa, the BJP threatened to protest if any action is initiated | P6

US Army Secy to meet Jaishankar in Delhi

New Delhi: Amid continuing strain in US-India relations over tariff uncertainty, US Army Secretary Daniel P Driscoll is scheduled to arrive in New Delhi. Sources confirmed that this will be Driscoll's first visit to India since assuming charge as Secretary of the Army. He will be accompanied by a 13-member delegation from the US | P11

Shinde gets Raj backing to checkmate Maha BJP

Mumbai: The power tussle between the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena continued in Maharashtra, as the latter claimed the support of five MNS corporators to stake a claim to the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) government, checkmating the BJP, which was eyeing the mayor post | P12

Chilean with 7.7kg of cocaine in kids' books held at KIA

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

IN a yet newer modus operandi, international drug cartels are using children's fairytale books for transnational smuggling of high grade contraband. The Air Intelligence Unit (AIU), Customs, on a credible tipoff, arrested a Chilean national and seized around 7.7kg of high-grade cocaine concealed in fairytale books in Spanish, at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA). The alleged mule, aged 70, was apprehended at the Customs arrival hall of T2 at 10.30am Wednesday.

According to informed sources, the AIU intercepted the Chilean national, who had arrived by Ethiopian Airlines ET-690 from Addis Ababa. "He was reportedly handed the cocaine consignment at Sao Paulo. He boarded the flight from the Brazilian city to Addis Ababa enroute to Bengaluru. The consignment was meant for delivery in Bengaluru. The accused had no onward travel booked," said sources. "He speaks only Spanish and refuses to divulge much."

The children's fairytale books in which the accused had concealed the cocaine

"On examination of his registered baggage, the AIU team found cocaine concealed in packets in children's fairytale books in Spanish. The consignment contained a little over 3kg of white powder and 4.5kg of black powder.

Field testing kit (FTK) of the powders confirmed it to be cocaine," said sources. Black cocaine, or coca negra, is a mixture of cocaine base/hydrochloride with charcoal, dyes, or charcoal to camouflage its appearance, evade sniffer dogs and detection.

In the grey market in India, cocaine sells between Rs 5crore and Rs 10crore per kg, depending on demand and quality. "The seized contraband is found to be high grade," said sources. CONTINUED ON: P7